



**Natural Resources
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News Release

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21 Dams Added to State List of High Hazard Structures Oklahoma Flood Control Update: August 2016

STILLWATER, Okla., Sept. 22, 2016—The total number of high hazard flood control dams in Oklahoma now stands at 260 out of 2,107 total structures. Based on hazard classification reviews conducted in 2015, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Conservation Engineering Section in Oklahoma has added 21 dams to the list of high hazard structures and removed 10.

“The hazard potential of a dam has nothing to do with the condition of the dam,” said Chris Stoner, NRCS State Conservation Engineer in Oklahoma. “It is only a reflection of downstream conditions and the potential for damage or loss of life in the unlikely event of a failure of the dam.”

Downstream development of homes and businesses is the primary cause of a dam being reclassified from low to high hazard. When a low hazard dam receives an upgraded classification, it often does not meet high hazard design standards, meaning construction is required to upgrade the structure. Federal funds for dam upgrades are limited, and Oklahoma’s projects must compete for funds with those of other states.

Operation and maintenance of flood control dams is critical to protecting homes and businesses, farms and ranches downstream. This is especially true in instances where a high hazard dam has not yet been upgraded to meet high hazard design standards.

With the exception of a few of the newly classified dams, all high hazard dams in the state have an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) which outlines measures to be taken in the event of a dam emergency. The remaining dams will have completed EAPs by the end of 2016.

“These new high hazard classifications underscore the need for continued support for the maintenance and upgrade of these structures,” said April Burns, Acting Assistant State Conservationist for Water Resources. “As development increases in areas that were once rural, so too does the need to fund maintenance and inspections.”

For the month of August 2016, Oklahoma’s flood control dams prevented \$6.1 million in damage to property downstream. The total value of damage prevented for 2016 so far is estimated to be \$104 million.

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